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SUBJECT: AL-KUT CELEBRATES EID WITH PLAY HIGHLIGHTING RULE
OF LAW, HUMAN RIGHTS

(U) This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The cast of the popular Iraqi TV sitcom Mud House performed a free outdoor public play in downtown al-Kut, sponsored by PRT Wasit, as part of the Eid celebrations on October 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. The hour-long play, a secular patriotic performance, hammered away at the themes of human rights, democracy, and the upcoming Iraqi provincial elections. Each performance was prefaced by a lecture on human rights and democracy given by one of Wasit's most respected law professors. Members of the provincial government, Iraqi police, U.S. forces, and the PRT, along with thousands of Wasit citizens and their children freely mingled at these early evening events. The lecture and play were covered by multiple Iraqi media outlets, including Iraqiya, Sharqia, Massar, and Salam TV. End summary.

PRT sponsors play for all comers

¶2. (SBU) The Mud House actors, from a popular Iraqi TV sitcom filmed in Wasit Province, drew overflow crowds to each of the three Eid performances. Supported by the PRT, with the request that the play involve the themes of rule of law and democracy, the actors presented a compelling, often hilarious, but ultimately tearful patriotic performance. Remarkable for its inclusiveness, the audience of over 4,000 included Iraqis from all walks of life. Young men sporting their finest new Eid clothing jockeyed for the best seats with tribal sheikhs in full traditional robes and families with small children. The Provincial Governor, the Chief of Police and an American Army Division Commander also attended this very public open air theater. At one point late in the show, as interest and humor peaked, dozens of children, clearly unconcerned at the American military presence at the event, moved forward to a position between the American Division Commander and the stage. In a particularly reassuring sign of improved security, several PRT and military interpreters brought their families including young children to the event and publicly introduced them to their coworkers from the PRT and American military units.

Human Rights and Rule of Law

¶3. (SBU) The events opened with a short introduction to the history of Human Rights and Rule of Law by Professor Sattar Sharhan of the Wasit College of Law. Starting with the signing of the Magna Carta and working through the American and French Revolutions, the professor finished by emphasizing the rights of individuals and minorities guaranteed by the new Iraqi constitution. He explained how these constitutional rights have challenged some of Iraq's less democratic neighbors, who, fearing that their own people also may demand these rights, are trying to destabilize Iraq. He praised the people of Iraq, especially the tribal leaders in the west and the Iraqi security forces, who stood up to these challenges and fought for Iraq and human rights. The actors followed up on this theme with their play &Iraq is Not for

Sale.8 The well-known cast pulled no punches in declaring that Iraq and its candidates for election were not for sale to foreign influences. The play ended with the cast holding an Iraqi flag and reciting a patriotic poem about the people,s love for and their willingness to sacrifice for Iraq.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The huge turnout of citizens to this outdoor event, held on the grounds of the al-Kut Tourist Hotel, the venue of intensive combat between Coalition forces and Jaysh al-Mahdi during the Sadr uprising of April 2004, is a strong indication that security prevails and a return to a more normal life clearly has begun in Wasit. That a prominent law professor as well as the famous actors of Mud House were willing to challenge militias and terrorist organizations and put their public officials on notice that the elections are not for sale in this decidedly public forum speaks highly not only for the courage of these individuals, but also for the improved security situation that allowed these events to take place. End comment.
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